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ABSTRACT

This document contains three papers from a symposium on expanding perspectives in human resource development (HRD) research. "The Concept of Culture in International and Comparative HRD Research: Methodological Problems and Possible Solutions" (Alexander Ardichvili, K. Peter Kuchinke) discusses the following topics: (1) alternative approaches to studying culture (models of cross-cultural psychology, constructivist approaches to studying culture); (2) the advantages and shortcomings of postpositivist and constructivist approaches to culture; (3) new directions for international and comparative HRD research; and (4) dealing with the complexity of culture's influence. "Global Change and New Organizational Paradigms: HRD Research Issues" (Reid Bates, Kelli C. Phelan) presents the paradigm of ecologically sustainable organizations and challenges HRD to recognize and respond to a number of important research questions related to human and organizational dimensions in the era of global change. "Expanding Perspectives on HRD Research: Understanding the Foundations of Phenomenology" (Sharon K. Gibson, Lisa A. Hanes) reviews the philosophical foundations of phenomenology; examines how the philosophy of phenomenology translates into a research methodology; explores how the concept of "lifeworld" can be applied to the phenomenological research process, and discusses the outcomes of phenomenology in terms of its contribution to the HRD knowledge base. All three papers include substantial bibliographies. (MN)

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The Concept of Culture in International and Comparative HRD Research: Methodological Problems and Possible Solutions

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The goal of the present paper is to illuminate some of the central issues in international and comparative HRD research, by helping HRD researchers to better understand the current approaches to culture, and by discussing the methodological problems arising from the current use of the concept of culture. Several alternative approaches to culture in international research are analyzed and criticized.

Keywords: International HRD, Cross-cultural Research, Culture

While many scholars in human resource development (HRD) and related fields have pointed to the dearth of international and cross-cultural research (e.g., Hansen & Brooks, 1994; Brewster, Tregaskis, Hegewich, & Mayne, 1996), in recent years, international and comparative research has become one of the fastest growing areas of scholarly inquiry in HRD. Within the Academy of HRD, international membership and the number of international papers presented at the Academy of HRD meetings have increased steadily; and numerous cross-cultural and international articles have appeared in all major HRD publications. The reasons for this increased interest in international research were summarized by McLean (2002), and Marquardt and Sofo (1999), who argue that globalization of business practices is inevitably leading to conditions under which most HRD practitioners, regardless of their specialization, need to understand and be able to influence cross-cultural and cross-border HR, training, and organization development practices. As Cray and Mallory (1998) point out, all international and comparative studies, regardless of specific topics of investigation, sooner or later refer to culture. While multiple approaches to cross-cultural research design have been identified (Usunier, 1998; Vijver & Leung, 1997), the treatment of culture in international HRD research is a matter of much deeper import than the selection of an appropriate research design and centers on our ontological and epistemological assumptions about the nature of culture and its role in shaping the phenomena of interest and our ability to understand cultures (our own or another) in a complete sense. Therefore, the goal of the present paper is to illuminate some of the critical issues and problems in international and comparative HRD research, by helping HRD researchers to better understand the current approaches to culture, and discussing the methodological problems arising from the current use.

Alternative Approaches to Studying Culture

A useful classification of social science research methodologies was proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (1998), who places all studies on a continuum, with constructivist and critical science studies on the one side, and positivist and postpositivist studies—on the other. The studies of the constructivist paradigm assume that there is no single reality out there that can be discovered by the researcher, and the reality is, rather, constructed by humans in their interactions. The postpositivist research, on the other hand, is based on an assumption that reality is —at least to some degree— stable and that, thus, the effort to uncover rules, theories, and models is a worthy goal of research. Thus, in the area of international social science research we identify the following major theoretical approaches, which provide alternative treatments of culture: postpositivist studies grounded in cross-cultural psychology; and three constructivist approaches: interpretive and ethnographic studies; studies in the cultural-historical tradition; and semiotic studies. In the pages that follow, we will provide a brief overview of these four strands of research, point out why we feel that all four fail to provide a satisfactory treatment of culture in the context of international and comparative research, and will propose strategies for improving our ability to account for the culture's role in international HRD research.

Models of Cross-Cultural Psychology

One treatment of culture has been pursued vigorously by cross–cultural psychologists over past two decades

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and has resulted in substantive and methodological advances related to shared cognition, assumptions, and values as fundamental building blocks of culture. A major tenet of cross–cultural psychology is the existence of psychological universals, frameworks for making sense of the tremendous variety and complexity of individual behavior and thought across the cultures of the world. The field is thus grounded in a realist conception of science as the search for patterns, regularities, and parsimonious explanatory systems that are pan–cultural without violating local and culture specific interpretation and meaning (Lonner, 2000). The cross–cultural research program has led to advances in theory by indexing countries along dimension of culture and mapping culturally similar regions, calculating value–related scores, and investigating the effects of national culture on a range of variables. Smith and Schwartz (1997) believe that values are "key elements, perhaps the most central, in [a society's] culture...[V]alue priorities of individuals represent central goals that relate to all aspects of behavior" (p. 79). Values represent beliefs and refer to desirable goals, they transcend specific action and situations and serve as standards for and of behavior, people, and events (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Values can be described at the personal and at the group level. Societal values represent ideas about what is good, right, and desirable, and find expression in individual behavior of a country's residents and also in that country's institutions as reflected in institutional goals and modes of operation. The vast majority of cross–cultural research has been conducted at the national level of analysis, although the degree of within–country variation has led writers such as Triandis (1995) to question this approach, especially in nations with sharp divisions among cultural groups. However, nationality has been shown to account for substantial amounts of variance in a variety of variables (e.g., Kuchinke & Ardichvili, 2002; Sak & Brannen, 2000), lending support for Hofstede's (1997) assertion that nations exert strong forces towards integration though a dominant language, institutions, political systems, and shared products, services, and national symbols. Thus, much cross–cultural research is based on the average value priority among national samples that is thought to represent the central thrust of a common acculturation (Smith & Schwartz, 1997), irrespective of individual differences. Since the 1980s, there have been four major programs of research on national values, and these will be summarized below.

Hofstede's Values Survey. Hofstede's (1980) classification of work–related cultural values is based on large–scale employee survey data collected at IBM and subsidiaries in 40 countries around the world. The study data bank of over 116,000 questionnaires reflected responses from seven occupational groups, including clerical, technical, professional, and managerial engaged in marketing and servicing. Hofstede used factor–analytic techniques and conceptual item analysis of country–level item scores and arrived at four underlying dimensions: Power Distance, the degree to which unequal distribution of power in institutions is accepted as legitimate by those less powerful; Individualism, the degree to which persons are expected to care primarily for themselves and their immediate families as opposed to caring for the wider in–group; Masculinity, the degree to which achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material success are valued instead of relationships, modesty, caring, and interpersonal harmony; and Uncertainty Avoidance, defined as the degree to which persons are uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, thus valuing stability and conformity. Bond (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) extended Hofstede's research by constructing a survey of values based on interviews with Chinese scholars and collected information from students in 23 countries, resulting in an additional factor Confucian Work Dynamism, subsequently adopted as a fifth dimension of Hofstede's (1997) framework as Long–term Orientation, expressing the orientation towards the future characterized by persistence, thrift, and observation of status versus personal steadiness and stability, protection of one's face, and respect for tradition.

Trompenaars' Values Survey. Trompenaars' approach to culture is based on sociological models (c.f., Parsons & Shils, 1951), of basic elements of social relationships as a way of tapping into employees' values in business organizations. Initial work with ten organizations in nine countries and some 650 participants in the mid–1980s has been expanded to over 15,000 participants from 50 nations (Trompenaars, 1994) most of whom were upper–level managers and professional employees participating in cross–cultural training programs. Trompenaars posits seven bipolar dimensions: Parsons' five relational orientations: universalistic versus particularistic rules for relationships ("what is right and good can be defined and always applies" versus "giving attention to the obligations of relationships and unique circumstances"); individualistic versus collectivistic views of the responsibility of individuals (whose primary obligation is either to the self or to the social group); neutral versus emotional ways of expressing feelings (either detached and objective or with full force of the underlying emotion); specific versus diffuse modes of involvement in social transactions (persons engaged in their specific roles as, for example, educators or bringing into play all facets of one's personality); and achievement versus ascription as the basis for according status (as either based on performance and accomplishments or on educational record, family ties, gender, age, and other attributes). In addition, this framework includes a society's attitudes towards time (as a linear

sequence of events versus a synchronous notion of past, present, and future as cyclical, repetitive, and commingled); and stances toward the environment (as subject to human control or requiring harmony and acquiescence).

The Schwartz Culture-level Approach. Schwartz and colleagues, in a series of influential articles, have addressed the structure of individual values in a comparative, cross-national perspective (e.g., Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). Using Kluckhohn's and Rokeach's cross-cultural works on values as a point of departure, Schwartz developed and validated a theory of human values and their underlying motivational goals. Arguing that universal human values are those that represent the basic requirements of individuals (biological needs, requisites of coordinated social action, and demands of group functioning), he proposed 10 motivational types of values, including power, achievement, hedonism, benevolence, and tradition. Specific value systems arise from value types in particular social, historical, economic, and geographic circumstances. As Smith and Schwartz (1997) report, this framework and associated instruments have been applied in 54 countries and some 44,000 individuals, primarily schoolteachers, and is thought to present a comprehensive "near-universal" (p. 88) set of value types at the individual level. Conceptually independent from this work, Schwartz also proposed three culture-level value dimensions that reflect, at the societal level, solutions to basic social problems. Societal issues are those concerning the assumption of the relationship between the individual and the group, the responsibility of the individual to contribute to the common good, and the role of humankind in submitting to, adapting to, or exploiting the natural and social worlds (Schwartz, 1994). The first dimension is labeled conservatism versus autonomy, reflecting the views of a culture to see individuals as primarily autonomous or imbedded in a web of social relationships and obligations, both intellectually and affectively. The second dimension, hierarchy versus egalitarianism describes a culture's way of ordering social relationships by ascribing roles and legitimizing unequal distributions of power, wealth, and influence, or by portraying individuals as moral equals with equal rights and responsibilities. The third dimension, mastery versus harmony, addresses a culture's stance towards the social and natural environments. Mastery cultures seek to influence and change the natural and social worlds for personal and group interests while harmony cultures accept the natural and social worlds as they are and emphasizing fitting in harmoniously and adapting to them.

Individualism and Collectivism. Perhaps the largest number of empirical studies in cross-cultural psychology and related fields have been based on a single dimension of culture: individualism and collectivism, with Smith *et al.* (1996) asserting that it "is probably safe to infer that this dimension is the most important yield of cross-cultural psychology to date" (p. 237). Triandis (1995) stated that most salient differences in behavior in international comparisons might be reduced to this dimension. Though by no means a new concept— Kagitcibasi (1997) traces its roots in social thought to ancient Greece in the West and Confucius in the East—there has been widespread interest in this dimension in recent past 20 years. Although definition vary to some degree, features and component ideas of individualistic societies include the view of the individual as an end in him or herself, belief in the obligation to realize the Self, to cultivate one's own judgment, and to resist social pressures toward conformity (Kagitcibasi, 1997). In collectivist societies there is an emphasis on the views, needs, and goals of the group; on social norms and duty as defined by the group; on shared beliefs and traditions; and on a readiness to cooperate and surrender personal goals to group interests. Antecedents of individualism include affluence, cultural complexity, social mobility, urbanism, and technological and economic development. These factors are related to an orientation focused on the Self and the immediate family, emotional detachment from the collective, a view that personal goals have primacy over those of the larger group and that behavior is regulated by rationality and cost-benefit analyses. Consequences of individualism include socialization for self-reliance and independence, adeptness when entering new groups, and loneliness. The many applications of this dimension—including its consequence for a wide range of individual-level variables, interpersonal and inter-group relations, and social institutions summarized by Triandis (1995) and Kagitcibasi, (1997)—lend credibility to assertion that it does present a valid, useful, and universal dimension of culture. Current debate concerns questions of whether individualism and collectivism might be more usefully conceived as separate attributes rather than as opposite poles of a continuum, whether each should be viewed as multidimensional, and what part of each might be conceived as trait or situation-based. Triandis (1995) has recently added to these conceptual refinements by arguing that in both individualistic and collectivistic societies, behavior and attitudes that go 'against the grain' are quite common. Triandis proposes four categories: vertical and horizontal individualism (self and group orientation respectively within a self-oriented culture) and vertical and horizontal collectivism (self-and group orientation respectively within a collectivistic culture).

Constructivist Approaches to Studying Culture

After outlining the postpositivist and largely etic approaches to assessing culture, we now turn to three emic frameworks of culture: the ethnographic and interpretive approach; the semiotic approach; and the cultural-historical approach.

The Ethnographic and Interpretive Perspective in International Research. A comprehensive discussion of the tenets of ethnographic and interpretive research would be impossible in this short paper. Therefore, we refer the reader to excellent in-depth analyses of this paradigm in Denzin and Lincoln (1998) and in Jessor, Colby, and Shweder (1999). Here we will point out several major traits of this approach, which are most relevant to our discussion. The origins of interpretive and ethnographic perspectives can be traced to Wundt's (1911) studies of folk beliefs, and to early attempts by anthropologists to understand cultures from the natives' point of view (Mead, 1948). Ethnographic and interpretive international researchers are more interested in specific cases than aggregate relationships, in more accurately grasping the point of view of the actor, in yielding more contextually situated understanding, and in providing a fuller, "thicker," description of the phenomenon of interest (Becker, 1999). Methods associated with this research paradigm range from ethnographic immersion (Geertz, 1983) to interviews and observations (Goodenough, 1970), and analysis and interpretation of various texts generated by insiders (Van Maanen, 1990). A common characteristic of interpretive approaches is the belief that interpretive analysis can help to identify different definitions, concepts, and models of truth. For example, interpretive interactionism (Denzin, 1992) attempts to capture meaning and produce meaningful descriptions and interpretations of social processes from subjective points of view of different actors.

Semiotic Models of Culture. An approach to cross–cultural research that attempts to introduce a more encompassing perspective on culture is grounded in semiotics, the study of signs. There are good examples of the application of semiotics in sociology, organization studies, and management research (c.f., Barley, 1986; Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1998). An example of the application of semiotics in cross-cultural and comparative research can be found in the work of Russian linguist and semiotics scholar, Yuri Lotman. Lotman (1990) argued that semiotic systems (language, cultural rules, religion, art, science, and so forth) are models that explain the world in which we live and, in explaining the world, they construct it. Among all these systems, language is the primary modeling system, allowing us to apprehend the world (Eco, 1990). Therefore, the study of culture should start with the study of the language system used within this culture; however, we also need to study all the secondary systems, which allow us to understand the world from different angles, allow us to speak about it. The goal of the Lotmanian investigation of culture is not to explain all the phenomena of that culture, but an explanation of why that culture has produced certain phenomena. To do this, we can analyze culture as a code, as a semiotic system, discovering both universal to all cultures and specific to certain culture elements. Lotman argues that no historical period has a sole cultural code and that in any culture, there exist simultaneously various codes. He sees a culture as a set of texts, and a nonhereditary collective memory (Lotman, 1971). On this basis, Lotman has conducted numerous analyses of different cultures, moving both along the time (historical studies) and space (geographical and cross–national studies) continuum. An example of how to categorize cultures according to the systems of rules and codes used by them can be found in his "Universe of the Mind" (1990). Lotman argues that cultures can be governed by a system of rules or by a repertoire of texts imposing models of behavior. By analogy to language learning, Lotman calls the former category "grammatical" (in grammatical approach, learners are introduced to a new language by a set of rules), and "textual" (this is the approach to language learning used by small children, who learn through exposure to a variety of verbal strings of language, without knowing underlying rules). In a grammar–oriented culture, texts are judged to be correct or incorrect according to their conformity to previously generated combinatorial rules; in a text–oriented culture, society directly generates texts, which propose models to be followed.

Cultural Psychology and Cultural-historical Approach. Is it possible to conduct cross–cultural research that would account for both traits and psychological characteristics of individual players and the complex cultural environment they are situated in? An approach to answering this question could be found in cultural psychology and the cultural–historical research paradigms. Taking a radical stance, Shweder (1991) believes that this question by itself is not a legitimate one, and attempts to introduce culture into psychological investigations are misguided. He argues for adopting a different paradigm, which, instead of viewing human minds as isolated processing devices, operating with inputs received from the cultural environment, sees the mind as inseparable from "the historically variable and culturally diverse intentional worlds in which it plays a co–constructive part" (Shweder, 1991, p. 13).

The individual behavior is shaping the cultural environment, and is constantly being shaped by culture. Therefore, dichotomies of person and environment cannot be analytically separated and described in terms of dependent and independent variables. There are numerous research streams that join to form the cultural psychology paradigm. Thus, Bruner (1990) locates psychological processes within the social–symbolically mediated everyday encounters of people in the lived everyday experiences. Bruner argues that these experiences are organized by "folk psychology," including a theory of how narrative structures organize people's meaning–making processes in their everyday activities. In Germany, a group of researchers has developed an approach to cultural psychology that underscored a developmental approach to the study of human nature (Boesch, 1990). Using a form of action theory, they linked individual change to historical change by interrelating "the three main levels of the concept of development within the same theoretical language: the actual genesis (process), the ontogeny, and the historio–genesis" (Eckensberger, Krewer, & Kasper, 1984, p. 97).

Another approach to closing the gap between individuals as subjects of cross–cultural research and their environment was proposed by scholars working in the cultural–historical research tradition (e.g., Cole, 1996; Cole & Engestrom, 1993), which emerged from the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and his followers. Central to this approach is rejection of the separation of individuals and their social environment. This idea is expressed by Vygotsky in the "general law of cultural development," which assumes that any higher psychological function appears "...on two planes. First it appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category and then within the individual child as an intrapsychological category." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Cole (1996) elaborated on the Vygotskian approach to cross–cultural investigations by putting emphasis on the following elements: mediated action in a context; importance of the "genetic method" understood broadly to include historical, ontogenetic, and microgenetic levels of analysis; grounding of the analysis in everyday life events; distributed and co–constructed nature of cognition; rejection of cause and effect, explanatory science in favor of science that emphasizes emergent nature of mind in activity and the central role for interpretation in research. Cole and Engestrom (1993) posit the *activity system* as the basic unit of analysis of individual and collective behavior. An activity system is any ongoing, object–directed, historically conditioned, and tool–mediated human interaction. It could be a family, a religious organization, a study group, a school, or a profession.

Critique of the Current Approaches to Culture

Despite significant contributions made by the above described research traditions, all of them suffer from a number of methodological problems, resulting in the following paradox: none of the approaches seems to be able to produce results that they claim to be their main advantages. Thus, *postpositivist* research is aimed at generation of universal, generalizable models and results, but there are numerous convincing arguments showing that this claim doesn't stand in international studies. And *constructivist* researchers pride themselves on their ability to report more realistic pictures of informants' lives, emotions, and feelings but, as numerous critics point out, they fail to do just this. Criticisms of *postpositivist approaches* exist on two levels: philosophical and methodological. At the philosophical level, critics point out the fundamental impossibility of capturing and describing the objective cultural reality, because, in their opinion, such reality does not exist outside the researcher's and the study participants' fluid and constantly changing perceptions and interpretations (Eco, 1992). The main methodological criticism is that "inferences drawn from aggregate data may not apply to all—or even any—of the individuals making up the aggregate" (Jessor, 1999, p. 12). In addition, international studies grounded in these approaches have been plagued by numerous methodological problems, among them inability to establish functional and conceptual equivalence of phenomena and behavior, and translation, sampling, measurement, and data collection errors (Harpaz, 1996). Of these concerns, the lack of conceptual equivalence (do the concepts used have the same meaning across the social units studied?) is among the most often discussed in the literature. For example, Usunier (1998) has demonstrated that the concept of "trust" has different meanings in the U.S., France, Germany, and Japan, making any comparative studies based on the U.S. concepts of trust difficult to uphold. The lack of functional equivalence is another common problem of cross-cultural psychology research: in many cases, even when concepts have the same meaning across cultures, these concepts perform different functions. Thus, even though the basic meaning of friendship may be similar in the U.S. and China, the functional role of friendship in the two cultures is different (Pye, 1986).

Constructivist approaches are most often criticized for the lack of generalizable conclusions. But, most studies of this group rest on an assumption of impossibility of any generalizations and concentrate instead on the generation of localized, context–specific knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Thus, poststructuralists (Foucault, 1980) and postmodern theorists (Lyotard, 1984) write local narratives about people's work and interaction, and reject the notion of generalizability of their results. However, what is supposed to be constructivism's advantage over

postpositivist research— researchers' ability to present more accurate accounts of participants' inner worlds and social interactions between them—is being increasingly questioned by constructivist researchers themselves. It is pointed out that most of researchers are just poorly informed outsiders who lack the background to understand the intricacies of local cultures and symbolic systems. As Tobin and Davidson (1990) point out, "in most cross-cultural educational research, Westerners study non-Westerners, whites study nonwhites, scholars study practitioners, and men study women and children" (p. 271). Recent attempts to address this fundamental problem involved methods of "polyvocal discourse," a "Rashomonian telling and retelling of the same ... events from different perspectives, an ongoing dialogue between insiders and outsiders, between practitioners and researchers..." (Tobin, 1989, p. 176). But, as Marcus and Cushman (1982) suggest, "While it is laudable to include the native, his (sic) position is not thereby improved, for his words are still only instruments of the ethnographer's will..." (p. 44). The researchers control and distort the informant's voices by imposing their own interpretations, narrative styles, and choices of the elements of the native's text to include in the research report (Clifford, 1983).

New Directions for International and Comparative HRD Research

The above discussion suggests that both postpositivist and constructivist approaches in international research fail to reach their stated goals: researchers are unable to generate either true insider accounts or universally usable models. To solve this problem, we would need to find and employ approaches that would improve our ability to understand and present accurately perspectives of different actors (research participants and other stakeholders). The importance of understanding the stakeholders' point of view and experiences was stressed in early anthropology writings (Mead, 1934), and in linguistics (Clark, 1985). One of the approaches to improving this understanding is mutual perspective taking, which happens when researchers and their subjects approach each other with a sense of nonjudgmental openness (Tenkasi & Mohrman, 1999). Although perspective taking does not completely solve the paradox of the insider's account, it helps to alleviate the problem by providing tools for bringing into the investigation multiple voices (those of researchers, the subjects, and other stakeholders), and making different perspectives explicit. An important prerequisite for true mutual perspective taking is creation of interpretive spaces for mutual meaning making (Tenkasi & Mohrman, 1995), for opening of one's preconceptions and assumptions to oneself and to others (Habermas, 1979). These spaces are similar to what Bresler (2002) calls "interpretive zones" in the conduct of international research. In Bresler's conceptualization, such zones are areas of overlap, joint custody, or contestation, where solutions have to be devised with the materials at hand. The interpretive zones involve dynamic processes of interaction and negotiation of multiple perspectives. Another approach that attempts to promote mutual learning and understanding across cultural contexts is appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Bilimoria, 1993). Used as a methodology for studying global social change, appreciative inquiry establishes ground rules promoting an uncritical approach to the others' perspectives, and calls for understanding the others' points of view without criticizing their knowledge claims (Tenkasi & Mohrman, 1999). A key to using appreciative inquiry and/or perspective taking in cross-cultural settings is to involve different actors holding competing definitions of a problem, who can act as "semiotic brokers" (Lyotard, 1984). This view of inter-cultural communication is based on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin who first introduced the notion of multivoicedness. The construction of realities for Bakhtin is dialogic. It is through dialogue that space for new realities is created (Bakhtin, 1981). Therefore, in contrast with most hermeneutic studies (e.g., Gadamer, 1976), the Bakhtinian metaphor for cross-cultural research is not centered on attempts to understand others' perspectives, as if these perspectives where rigid, ones-and-for-all given, but a constant creation of new realities in a multivoiced dialogue involving the researcher and the subjects.

The above methods are aimed at enhancing the intersubjective understanding. However, before the distance between different participants in the research process can be reduced, researchers should be able to better understand their culturally conditioned interpretation biases. Usunier (1998) argues for cultural deconstruction as a way of addressing the issue of these biases and suggests that it should be used in both postpositivist and constructivist studies. Because most cross-cultural research situations involve encounters between researchers and instruments from one culture and informants from another, it is necessary to start any investigation with a pre research self-inquiry: "Cultural deconstruction ... involves a systematic investigation of the basis on which the research design will rest, including a self-assessment of the researcher's own part in terms of underlying concepts and theories, as well as attitudes towards the research practice" (Usunier, 1998, p. 137). Usunier (1998) argues that we, as researchers, are likely to produce a certain kind of research and research reports as a function of our perception of the tastes of our immediate scientific community and the dominant professional culture of the major stakeholders. Plus, our interpretations could be significantly biased by our own and the major stakeholders' national culture.

Conclusion: Dealing with Complexity

The argument presented in this paper suggests that our ability to conduct international HRD research that produces useable results depends not so much on our choice of methodologies, but on our ability to incorporate in our investigation culture as a major influencing factor, and to account for culture's influence on phenomena under investigation. And to do this, we need a better understanding of our own and others' culturally conditioned perspectives and assumptions. This understanding is achieved by cultural deconstruction, appreciative inquiry, using the insider/outsider perspectives, and mutual perspective taking. However, even if such better understanding is achieved, one overarching problem of the international research will remain: a researcher from one country is not likely to have necessary cultural background to understand, notice, and record the intricacies of day to day interactions between individuals from other cultures and locales, or to develop universally valid constructs to be used in quantitative models. A solution to this problem is found in the use of cross–cultural teams of researchers (Teagarden, et al. 1995), with individual team members conducting investigations in familiar to them and geographically proximal locales—although here, too, the cultural divide among the team will present challenges in inter-subjective understanding and much work is required to bridge the gap.

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Global Change and New Organizational Paradigms: HRD Research Issues

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The absence of discourse in HRD about organizational paradigms wrought by globalization represents both a critique of the field and an opportunity. Presenting the paradigm of ecologically sustainable organizations as a focus, this paper challenges HRD to recognize and respond to a number of important research questions related to human and organizational dimensions in the era of global change. Addressing these questions offers HRD a chance to broaden its research domain and enhance its contribution to worldwide social and economic development.

Keywords: Global Change, Sustainable Organizations, Ecological Values

That the world has entered an era of globalization has become accepted fact, or as Kobrin (1998) concludes, it is a fait accompli. What exactly globalization is, however, is less clear. The predominant tendency is to view globalization as an "epochal shift" (Burbach & Robinson, 1999) wrought by the integration of capital, technology, and information to create a single global market (Friedman, 2000; McLean, 2001; Rodrik, 1997). In this view, globalization is a qualitatively new economic development characterized by the transnationalization of production and capital ownership that powers in its wake changes in other spheres of life. Others (Cooperrider & Dutton, 1999; Mayer, 2001) see globalization as a much broader, more complex and historical phenomena. From this perspective, globalization consists of a number of ongoing parallel processes including ecological change, the integration of ecosystems, human mobility, global trade and investment, culture change, the spread of human rights and democracy that are occurring simultaneously and in many cases reinforcing one another.

A number of fields of study in the social and behavioral sciences have recognized that the changes being wrought in the context of this broader view of globalization require a greater emphasis on research and theory examining the processes of global change, sustainable development, and global interdependence. Multidisciplinary efforts along these lines represent a broad area of inquiry directed at:

- Increasing our understanding of the dynamics of global change
- Strengthening efforts to study and anticipate social changes
- Identifying social strategies to mitigate the effects of global changes
- Analyzing organizational and strategic options that can contribute to sustainable economic and ecological development (Cooperrider & Bilimoria, 1993).

This final element noted above is important because it recognizes that organizations and global change issues are intimately intertwined. Analyzing this relationship and understanding how complex organizations interpret and respond constructively to global change offers substantial opportunities for scientific inquiry in organizations. These opportunities have given rise to a new field of inquiry labeled organizational dimensions of global change (Cooperrider & Dutton, 1999). Research and theorizing in this area are particularly important because of the increasing prominence of non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations in social, political and economic development, and the power of transnational corporations as engines of global change (Bilimoria, Cooperrider, Kaczmarski, Khalsa, Srivastva, & Upadhayaya, 1995; Khandawalla, 1988). Indeed, it has been argued that nothing on the global change agenda can be fully understood outside the role and functioning of organizations: "Any effort to understand . . . global change that does not include a sustained commitment to improving our knowledge of the organizational dimensions cannot succeed" (Cooperrider & Dutton, 1999, p. 4).

The purpose of this paper is to identify and discuss why the field of HRD should be concerned with organizational dimensions of global change, and moreover, discuss a number of ways in which the field of HRD can contribute to the needed research in this area. Our suggestions focus on issues related to the organizational paradigm, ecologically sustainable organizations, which has received little attention in the Western HRD literature.

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Our hope is that this paper will initiate a dialogue about HRD's potential contribution to this important area, and also about the implications this focus has for broadening HRD's domain of inquiry, theory, and practice.

New Organizational Paradigms

A burgeoning number of organizational scholars have recognized that the global age will require more from business organizations in terms of their commitment and responsibility to environmental, social, and financially sound management and investment policies than has been the case in the past. This broader set of responsibilities will be expressed through new, more proactive organizational paradigms. These new paradigms have been discussed under rubrics such as strategic global change organizations (Cooperrider & Dutton, 1999; Khandawalla, 1988), natural-resource-based corporations (Hart, 1995), ecologically sustainable organizations (Shrivastava, 1994), ecocentric organizations (Purser, Park, & Montouri, 1995), and mediating institutions (Fort, 1996).

Two key assumptions underlie the development of these paradigms. One is that the hyper-capitalized globalized economic system (Rifkin, 2000) is an element of global change that in most cases does not deliver socially or ecologically responsible results. That it is in fact "breaking down patterns of life and community, imposing a dynamic of rapid change on many segments of most societies, and severely degrading the natural environment on which business, communities, and ultimately human life are dependent" (Mayer, 2001, pp. 218-219). In addition, it is assumed that business is mistaken in its belief that "enlightened self-interest will guide society to a sustainable future" (Purser et. al., 1995 p. 1062). This is because when faced with a choice between socially responsible business activities or sound ecological practices and economic advantage, business will almost without question choose economic advantage. This 'egocentric orientation', in which organizations devote their resources to the optimal utilization of social and natural resources in the pursuit of competitive advantage, leads to disjunctive thinking characterized by limited scope, imaginary oppositions (e.g., human versus nature), as well as difficulty in fully understanding how nested organizational activities are within social and ecological systems (Purser et. al., 1995). A number of authors criticize the present global economic system as inefficient, unstable, wasteful, afflicted with short-termism, destructive of communities, cultures, and the natural environment, socially divisive, and ultimately one that does not represent the optimal system of allocation of resources needed to meet human needs (Hawken, 1994; Korten, 1996; Madeley, 1999; Soros, 1994). Dowling (1999) describes it as the "the increasingly complex international environment." He adds that it is "characterized by global competitors, global customers, universal products, rapid technological change, and world-scale factories which pushes the multinational toward global integration while, at the same time, host governments and other stakeholders (customers, suppliers, and employees) push for local responsiveness" (p. 40-41).

Consequently, one key defining feature of the new organizational paradigms is their view that corporations have a responsibility and constructive role to play in creating positive global change (Harman & Hormann, 1990). The new organizational paradigms are concerned with emancipating ecological, social, and cultural systems from organizational mismanagement and abuse. They emphasize achieving a balance between productive systems and ecological and social systems and making organizations accountable for what they do and what they invest in. Some see the value of these paradigms as bridging the dichotomy between modern bureaucratic organizations and the demands of a postmodern global system of change (Cooperrider & Bilimoria, 1993; Daly & Cobb, 1994) and creating what can be called ecologically sustainable organizational performance. A number of fields of scientific inquiry including anthropology (Kearney, 1995), sociology (Boulding, 1988; de Oliveira & Tandon, 1994), organizational behavior (Khandawalla, 1988), leadership (Egri & Frost, 1994), strategic management (Cooperrider & Biliamoria, 1993), organizational learning (Mylonadis, 1993), organizational design (Ostlund & Larsson, 1991), and business ethics have begun to take keen interest in paradigms such as these. There is currently, however, no discussion, research, or theorizing about these new organizational paradigms in the field of HRD. If HRD is going to be a leader in the development of individuals and organizations in the 21st century, then it is immediately challenged with the responsibility of responding to these paradigms through the conceptualization of new roles through research, theory, and practice. With HRD's primary concern with human growth and developmental activities, we believe it is uniquely positioned for meeting these challenges, facilitating leadership roles in organizations, and simultaneously increasing value to the profession.

HRD and Organizational Dimensions of Global Change

Considering the underpinnings of HRD, a logical flow of reasoning can be revealed as to why HRD should be concerned with organizational dimensions of global change. While HRD is a relatively young academic discipline, its foundations are grounded in systems theory, which presents a broad, open, and whole perspective on

environments and their physical and non-physical boundaries; hence, supporting the interconnectivity between organizations and global change. In addition, several scholars have articulated descriptions that attempt to define the academic and practical scope of the field of HRD, but of particular interest to this paper is a recent definition by a noted HRD scholar. It reads: "Human Resource Development is any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adults' work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, or, ultimately, the whole of humanity" (McLean & McLean, 2001). The latter poses several alternatives for viewing/conceptualizing the role(s) of HRD and their possible contributions to a greater sense of development in the cultural, social, economical, and environmental realms.

HRD is by nature interdisciplinary and focuses on application of methods and processes designed to advance learning, meaning, and performance in work systems. This focus assumes that work systems are created to enhance the human condition and that they do not exist independently from the people that comprise them. Rather they are composed of people and processes, often multiple collectives with complex systems of social relationships, which have a shared set of symbols (e.g., language) and experience. The fact that work systems are composed of the human element makes them the appropriate focal point for HRD activity. It also means that by their very nature they can be greatly affected by the dynamics of global change. We therefore suggest one critical area of research for HRD to address is how the process of human resource development can help facilitate a transition towards these new organizational paradigms associated with global change. The concept of ecological sustainability through organizations is offered as a focal lens for HRD to view a new organizational paradigm. Two critical issues to be considered with this concept include the roles that ecological values and value transformation play in this transition.

HRD and Ecological Values

Several organizational scholars have discussed the kinds of changes that will have to occur as organizations transition to these new paradigms involving greater ecological responsibility and/or values. For example, Jennings and Zandbergen (1995) indicated that this type of change will require deep changes in the culture, strategic adaptability and learning systems of organizations. Hart (1995) suggests this transitioning will require a shared future vision that penetrates throughout the corporation. Post and Altman (1992) have offered a three stage model of "corporate greening" that suggests shifting to these new paradigms will require substantial changes in organizational strategy and its implementation which, to be successful, must be accompanied by the transformation of organizational culture and learning systems.

The previous views of shifting to an ecologically sustainable focus for organizations recognize that the deep integration of ecological values into the culture and learning systems of organizations is a necessary vanguard for the kind of change needed to realize these new organizational paradigms (Throop, Starik, & Rands, 1993). They are explicit about the need for a deep-seeded change in values within organizations as a precursor to paradigmatic changes in practice. These value changes should center on the development of value structures oriented around a profound individual and organizational understanding and acceptance of the principles of ecological sustainability as a social good. The transformation and creation of value structures within organizations and individuals is important because these structures provide standards for conduct (Williams, 1968) and behavioral guides capable of transcending specific situations (Schwartz, 1992). In short, they provide individuals and organizations with an ordered framework for resolving conflicts and making decisions consistent principles of ecological sustainability.

One critical area for HRD research and dialogue would involve an active consideration of the values and belief systems associated with ecological sustainability. This would involve, first, research directed at defining the structure and content of a value system centered on ecological sustainable organizational performance. There are a number of organizations that have begun to embrace these principles at varying degrees which would provide a key resource for more concretely defining these values. Research in these organizations could begin to define a factor or facet structure of these values.

HRD and Value Transformation

Next, it would be productive to develop some theoretical and practical understanding of the role that HRD plays in framing and developing ecological values in organizations. For example, HRD has been characterized as the social conscience of organizations (Gilley & Maycunich, 2000), a role that is concerned with diversity and equality in work systems, issues of social responsibility (Hatcher, 1998; 2000) and sustainable human development. Several pressing questions present themselves for HRD. First, discourse is needed to define the responsibilities of a 'social conscience' role and determine the extent to which this is an appropriate role for HRD. To the extent this role is

appropriate and can be defined, research will be needed on the models or theories that can most effectively enhance our understanding of this role and how it can be implemented in organizations. For example, as architects of organizational performance systems and facilitators of human learning and development, perhaps HRD can best facilitate change by embodying ecological values and expressing them in organizations through a legitimate 'check and balance' role (McAndrew, 2000). Or perhaps HRD's role in the development and dissemination of ecological values can better be understood through the application of Burgoyne and Jackson's (1997) 'arena thesis'. In this view, HRD assumes the role of mediator where value and goal conflicts between organizations and the requirements of ecologically sustainable development are clarified, negotiated and resolved.

In the context of these roles, further work will have to be directed at understanding the problems that will be faced in developing and deeply embedding an ecological value system in organizations. For example, what kinds of powerful social processes (Senge, 1990) need to be set in motion to generate consensus about the meaning of ecological sustainability, its valuation as a social good, and core purpose of the organization? How can these values be legitimated, disseminated, and maintained? What kinds of empowerment practices (self-management, participative decision-making) are most effective at building intra-organization commitment to these issues? If values must be actualized in practice in order to be instrumental (Argyris, 1990), what are the links between these values and the skills needed by individuals to be effective in organizations oriented around ecologically sustainable principles? What attitudes, values, and competencies are needed by organizational leaders to deal with these issues at a strategic level? How are they best developed?

Furthermore, there has been an increasing scholarly interest over the last decade in issues such as spiritual development in leaders (Conger & Associates, 1994; Vaill, 1990) and managers (Block, 1993; Hawley, 1993). Unfortunately elements of spirituality and personal transformation are typically a secondary consideration in HRD, subordinate to learning and performance improvement goals. Consequently, although a handful of scholars have recognized the value of these processes as important dimensions of HRD (Hatcher, 2000; Hawley, 1993) little research has been done in this area. Key research questions could investigate the effect that personal transformation has on the transition of organizations to ecologically sustainable paradigms. For example, how does the personal transformation of leaders and managers affect organizational goals, employee behavior, personal and organizational value structures, culture, perceptions of accountability and social responsibility, and global consciousness? Considerable attention will have to be paid to theory development and evaluation in this area so as to provide some insight into key theories or models that might useful for understanding and managing this change process. Descriptive examples, case studies, and first-hand accounts of organizations that have been fundamentally changed through the personal transformation of its members could provide a wealth of information and help determine what is to be learned from these experiences.

At another level of analysis, organizations capable of matching values with goals and objectives are seen as having the capacity to be powerfully effective. This has led to speculation that the deep acceptance of values associated with ecological sustainability will lead to more innovative and progressive organizations (Jennings & Zandbergen, 1995) or to substantial increases in the development of new, low-impact technologies and competencies (Hart, 1995). What kinds of data can we generate to support or refute these hypotheses? Competing propositions regarding these and other questions centered on values and the shift to ecologically sustainable organizational paradigms can serve as a basis for future descriptive and prescriptive research in the field of HRD.

Summary & Conclusions

The era of globalization has entered the world. The perspective of globalization as a historical and complex phenomenon presents a broad set of new challenges for the organizational sciences. A number of disciplines have stepped up to accept this challenge. Unfortunately, HRD has been late to step up to the plate. This paper suggests a few areas of research and inquiry through which HRD could make a contribution to organizational dimensions of global change research. The focus was on the organizational paradigm ecologically sustainable. We argue that the challenges inherent in this important paradigm offer a tremendous opportunity for HRD to enhance its contribution to social and economic development.

The current absence of discussion, research, or theorizing about these organizational paradigms in the field of HRD represents both a critique of the field as well as a call to broaden its research and practice. This paper outlines several areas into which HRD should expand its research. First, HRD is encouraged to actively seek to understand the structure of values systems associated with ecological sustainable organizational performance, and to investigate how to promulgate these systems in organizations. An example of this would include, What responsibilities are associated with a social conscience role, and is this an appropriate role for HRD? Other questions may be directed at principles of ecological sustainability, specifically its valuation as a social good in relation to organizational

practices. Another potentially informative research direction highlights the nature and role of personal transformation in meeting the organizational challenges of paradigmatic change. How do personal transformations of leaders in organizations affect various organizational structures? Finally, research directed at understanding the strategic, process and behavioral problems that characterize these kinds of organizations constitutes a critically important contribution to be made by the field of HRD. How can the values, goals, and objectives of organizations be strategically utilized for innovation?

How this Research Contributes to New Knowledge in HRD

It is clear that HRD is a fundamental tool for change and adaptation and is the primary mechanism through which the human capital of communities, organizations, and nations is increased and preserved. The recognition that HRD plays a critical role in human progress has put increasing demands on the field of HRD practice to address an ever widening range of objectives. This paper's contribution to new knowledge in the field of HRD is expressed in the form of a number of exciting and potentially fruitful questions related to human and organizational change in this global era. We suggested several areas into which our current research focus could be expanded. Our hope is that by doing so, we can raise the level of discourse within the HRD community and generate interest in honestly exploring these and other organizational dimensions of global change issues. However, we also believe that moving forward in this arena my require HRD as a profession to rigorously question some fundamental values and accepted paradigms, ask questions that challenge basic assumptions, and discover new values, theories and practices that can help lead organizations into the future.

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Expanding Perspectives on HRD Research: Understanding the Foundations of Phenomenology

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Phenomenology is a research methodology that has direct application to HRD as it helps explicate the essence of the human experience. This paper reviews the philosophical foundations of phenomenology and examines how this philosophy translates into a research methodology. The application of the philosophical concept of lifeworld is explored as it relates to the phenomenological research process. Outcomes of phenomenology are discussed in terms of its contribution to the knowledge base of human resource development.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Research Methodology, Philosophy

To return to the things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. ix)

Phenomenology is an interpretive research methodology, which is aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of everyday experience. Simply put, "phenomenology describes how one orients to lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 4).

Phenomenological studies begin with a question about the meaning of participants' experiences of a phenomenon for which the researcher has a serious interest and commitment. In order to understand phenomenology, it is important to understand the philosophy that under girds it and how this philosophy translates into research methodology. This understanding is critical to applying this methodology in research design. Phenomenology has important applications to research in the field of human resource development as it helps explicate the essence of human experience.

Philosophical Foundations of Phenomenology

van Manen (1990) suggested that the distinction made by phenomenology between appearance and essence is what differentiates it from other qualitative research approaches such as ethnography, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology. Polkinghorne (1989) provided support for this distinction in his discussion of phenomenological research methods, in that he proposed that phenomenology differs from other approaches due to its emphasis on the participants' experienced meaning rather than just on a description of their observed behaviors or actions. The differentiating assumption of phenomenology is that there is an essence or essences to shared experience. In defining phenomenology as a philosophical tradition, Husserl is described as having the basic philosophical assumption that "we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness" (Patton, 1990, p. 69). Phenomenologists focus on how human beings understand their experiences so as to make sense of the world. Basic to this philosophy is the belief that there is no separate (or objective) reality for people. According to van Manen (1990), the act of phenomenological research is an intentional act of bringing the world into being for us and in us.

Phenomenology, as founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), emerged as an epistemological philosophy and was carried forward and refined by philosophers such as Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). Tracing the terms 'phenomenology' and 'phenomenon' back to their Greek derivations, Heidegger (1962) defined a phenomenon as "that which shows itself," and more specifically, "that which shows itself in itself" (p. 51). Thus, in philosophical terms, phenomenology means "to let that which shows itself be seen," as Heidegger

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stated, "To the things themselves!" (p. 58). Therefore, phenomenology is the uncovering and showing of things as they truly are. According to Heidegger, phenomenology is the exhibition and explication of a phenomenon. Four major concepts of phenomenology in philosophical writings provide the foundation for phenomenology as a research methodology in the human sciences. These philosophical concepts are intentionality, lifeworld, intersubjectivity, and embodied consciousness.

Intentionality

As humans, we have consciousness and intentionality. Giorgi (1997) described intentionality, in Husserlian terms, as "the essential feature of consciousness," in that an act of consciousness or awareness "is always directed to an object that is not itself consciousness, although it could be, as in reflective acts" (p. 237). When an object presents itself to us, it presents itself as *something* and we see it as *something* and interpret it as *something*. Even if we see only parts of an object—such as the top of a table—the object presents itself as a table, and our consciousness sees it as the whole table. Husserl (1982) described the concept of intentionality:

> In my waking consciousness I find myself in this manner at all times, and without ever being able to alter the fact, in relation to the world which remains one and the same, though changing with respect to the composition of its contents. (p. 53)

The objects in the world present themselves to those in the world; humans in the world interpret them to be what they are, and even if we only see a part of the objects, as humans with intentionality, we intuit the wholeness of the entity. There is an innate "knowing of [the objects in the world]" (Husserl, 1982, p. 52) even with little attention paid to them and with little conceptual thinking of them. Husserl termed this innate knowing of something as "a clear intuiting," which can be described as a perceiving, or an operative experiencing of the objects or phenomena (p. 52). Therefore, intentionality is human consciousness or awareness directed outward into the world and the resulting innate perception of the whole of objects in the world.

The philosophical concept of intentionality is important to phenomenology as a research methodology since the purpose of phenomenological research is to understand how humans experience and perceive certain objects or phenomena in the world. The concept of intentionality shares a close relationship with the lifeworld because intentionality is directed outward to objects, persons, and phenomena in the world. The philosophical concept of the lifeworld is described below.

The Lifeworld

In his attempt to develop a philosophy of science that was rigorous but also as close as possible to the natural world of humans, Husserl (1982) made important contributions to phenomenology with his concept of natural attitude, which was later designated as 'the lifeworld.' The natural world exists around us all the time; the world of the natural attitude includes the "I and My Surrounding World" (Husserl, 1982, p. 51).

> It is continually "on hand" for me and I myself am a member of it . . . this world is there for me not only as a world of mere things, but also with the same immediacy as a *world of objects with values, a world of goods, a practical world* [emphasis in original]. (Husserl, 1982, p. 53)

The natural world exists prior to our knowledge of it and *'prior to any 'theory'"* (Husserl, 1982, p. 56). As humans, we are always in the natural world and in the natural attitude; in our consciousness, we approach things with intentionality. To describe his concept of natural attitude, Husserl (1982) stated,

> I am conscious of a world endlessly spread out in space, endlessly becoming and having endlessly become in time. I am conscious of it: [T]hat signifies above all, that intuitively I find it immediately, that I experience it. By my seeing, touching, hearing, and so forth, and in the different modes of sensuous perception, corporeal physical things with some spatial distribution or other are *simply there for me, "on hand"* [emphasis in original] in the literal and figurative sense whether or not I am particularly heedful of them and busied with them in my considering, thinking, feeling, or willing. Animate beings too—human beings, let us say—are immediately there for me. . . . They are also present as actualities in my field of intuition even when I do not heed them. (p. 51)

In later writings, Husserl used the term 'lifeworld' or *'Lebensvelt'* to acknowledge the natural world. Gadamer (1989) explicitly described the lifeworld as,

> the world in which we are immersed in the natural attitude that never becomes an object as such for us, but that represents the pregiven basis of all experience. This world horizon is a presupposition of all science as well and, therefore, more fundamental. (pp. 246-247)

The lifeworld is already there for us; it exists *prior to* science, *prior to* theory, *prior to* reflection, and *prior to* our attitudes about it. The lifeworld exists *prior to* our conception of it and our ideas about it.

The lifeworld, then, is the place where humans are in the world or with the world, and therefore, it is the starting point for research in the human sciences. The lifeworld is the world as it is "lived by the person" not an entity separate and independent of the person (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989, p. 9). Thus, in order to build on existing knowledge and create new knowledge in the human sciences, researchers must go to the lifeworld and study the way in which humans experience phenomena within the lifeworld in their natural attitude. This is the purpose of phenomenology as a research methodology.

Intersubjectivity

Interrelated with the concepts of intentionality and the lifeworld is the concept of intersubjectivity, which describes how we are in the world. Heidegger (1962), like Husserl (1982), conceived of the world as already existing: "The 'world' has already been 'presupposed', and indeed in various ways" (p. 92). Yet, Heidegger (1962) took Husserl's concept of consciousness one step further: He contended that human consciousness, or beingness, comes from our relationship with the world. Therefore, consciousness is a situated consciousness that results from our relationship with the world and others in the world. A "being world" is a "with-world" or *"Mitvelt"* (Heidegger, 1962, p. 155). The lifeworld is an intersubjective world where the subject and others are together in a relationship in the world, even if the other is not present. As conceptualized by Heidegger (1962),

> Being-with is an existential characteristic of Dasein [our being in the world] even when factically [sic] no other is present-at-hand or perceived. Even Dasein's Being-alone is Being-with in the world. . . . Being-alone is a deficient mode of Being-with; its very possibility is the proof of this. (pp. 156-157)

We are always in an intersubjective relationship with the world. In interviews for phenomenological research, intersubjectivity is the act of the researcher being with and developing a trusting relationship with the interviewee as s/he describes her/his experience with the phenomenon being investigated. Dahlberg and Drew (1997) referred to the intersubjective coming together of researcher and interviewee as the 'encounter,' because the researcher not only gives attention to information the interviewee provides about the experience, but is also cognizant of the interviewee as an individual and strives to make interaction with the interviewee both positive and equitable.

Embodied Consciousness

Merleau-Ponty (1962) took the three concepts of consciousness, the lifeworld, and intersubjectivity further when he contended that they are experienced through the body. He defined this being-with in the lifeworld as intercorpeality: "Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body" (pp. 138-139). We are in the lifeworld, or the 'lived world,' as bodies, and we live the world through the body: "The body is our general medium for having a world" (p. 146). The body is not separate from the self, nor does it exist "*in*" space, or "*in*" time; rather, it exists as part of the self, and "it *inhabits* space and time" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 139). The body is our medium for existing in the world; "the body expresses existence at every moment," and "existence realizes itself in the body" (p. 166). Husserl (1970) also referred to the subjective body when he stated, "it is in this world that we ourselves live, in accord with our bodily . . . personal way of being" (p. 50).

Thus, when two individuals come together in the world, they are embodied consciousnesses coming together; they bring their own spatiality and temporality, which can have an impact on both individuals' bodies and consciousnesses. For example, if the researcher is disturbed or surprised by something an interviewee says, and the interviewee notices this change in the researcher through the researcher's nonverbal cues, the interviewee might stop discussing the particular topic. The interviewee might begin to say what s/he thinks the researcher wants to hear rather than continue the interview in a way that allows the interviewee to personally experience the phenomenon discussed. Therefore, the phenomenological researcher must be aware of the subjective body; s/he must understand how the body can affect his or her consciousness and the consciousness of the interviewee, and how the coming together of the bodies can impact the consciousness of those involved.

Phenomenology as a Research Methodology

Husserl (1970), in an attempt to define a rigorous science, explicated that the interpretive view is most appropriate for human science as it takes place in the lifeworld. A research methodology such as phenomenology, which does not work in pure forms or idealities, is needed to examine how bodies or experiences actually show themselves, not to extrapolate them to how they have shown themselves in some ideal form. We must go back to Heidegger's

(1962) maxim, "To the things themselves!" and not to the ideal form of the things themselves, because the ideal form does not represent how they actually are as phenomena or human experiences in the lifeworld (p. 58). Gadamer (1989) also proclaimed the lifeworld as the starting point of science:

> The world in which we are immersed in the natural attitude that never becomes an object as such for us, but that represents the pregiven basis of all experience. This world horizon is a presupposition of all science as well and is, therefore, more fundamental. (p. 247)

Giorgi (1997) agreed when he stated, "From a phenomenological viewpoint, the life-world is pre-theoretical and prescientific and not yet theoretical or scientific in itself. It is the foundation of all sciences" (p. 248). van Manen (1990) described the research methodology of phenomenology as "the study of lived experience" or "the study of the lifeworld" (p. 9). Phenomenological inquiry seeks to describe the deep essence of life experiences and the meanings derived from those experiences.

Phenomenological researchers are interested in understanding an experience for its own sake (Polkinghorne, 1989). The desired outcome of phenomenological inquiry is to utilize knowledge from the essence of the experience; to gain deeper understanding of the experience and become more aware of our thoughts and actions as they relate to the experience; and to seek deeper understanding in ourselves, rather than to search for universal laws, as in the positivistic research paradigm (Hultgren, 1989). A particularly compelling description of the status of phenomenology is expressed by van Manen (1990), who identified that this methodology is both new and old. It is new in the sense that this type of human science may be similar to a breakthrough or liberation from present concepts of scholarship based on theoretical and technological thought. It is old in that, over the ages, human beings have created artistic, philosophical, communal, mimetic and poetic languages for the purpose of connecting themselves to their lived experience.

Giorgi (1997) transformed the philosophical concepts of phenomenology into methodological concepts of phenomenological research. The following section explicates three major concepts within the phenomenological research methodology proposed by Giorgi: The essence of the experience, description, and phenomenological reduction.

The Essence of the Experience

In phenomenological research, we seek to find the essence of the experience of a phenomenon. The basic assumption underlying phenomenology as a research methodology is that there are core meanings or essences to shared experience (Patton, 1990). Therefore, the goal of the phenomenological researcher is to uncover these essences or underlying themes of meaning of shared experience.

Essences are the core invariates of the experience, which, if non-existent, would render the experience something else. "These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through phenomenon commonly experienced . . . for example the essences of loneliness, the essence of being a mother, or the essence of being a participant in a particular program" (Patton, 1990, p. 70). van Manen (1990) described essence as "the essential nature of a thing, the true being of a thing . . . that what makes a thing what is rather than its being or becoming something else" (p. 176). Giorgi (1997) described the essence as "the most invariant meaning for a context," "a fundamental meaning without which the phenomenon could not present itself as it is," and "a constant identity that holds together and limits the variations that a phenomenon can undergo" (p. 242). For Husserl (1970),

> It then becomes evident that a unity runs through this multiplicity of successive figures, that in such free variations or an original image, e.g. of a thing, an *invariant* is necessarily retained as the *necessary general form*, without which an object such as this thing, as an example of its kind, would not be thinkable at all. (p. 341)

Description in Phenomenology

Phenomenological research utilizes thick, rich description of the experience and the meanings of the experience to reveal the essences of the experience. Because the purpose of phenomenological research is to understand better the lifeworld and the natural attitude, participants—who are in the natural attitude—provide descriptions as they talk about their specific experiences of the phenomenon under study (Giorgi, 1997). The interviewees, while in the natural attitude, provide concrete and detailed descriptions of their experiences with the phenomenon under study, and these descriptions become the text that the researcher utilizes to uncover the essences of that phenomenon.

> Descriptions of such experience should be instantly recognizable, expanding and enriching the store of knowledge about the lifeworld. The end result of phenomenological description is that its generalizability, its

universal nature, connects us with others, ultimately validating our own experience. (Dahlberg & Drew, 1997, p. 310)

At this point, it is important to discuss the differences between description and interpretation. The purpose of phenomenological research is to uncover the essence of the phenomenon through excerpts of descriptions of the phenomenon from the research participants. Again, the focus is on description, which differs from interpretation. It must be noted, however, that researchers can never totally step out of their own implicit pre-understandings and interpretations of the phenomenon. Therefore, "pure description and knowledge (i.e., accounts and explanations of human experience free of the researcher's own perspective and involvement in the lifeworld) are impossible" (Dahlberg & Drew, 1997, p. 315). As Husserl (1982) asserted, humans have intentionality and will see something as something when it presents itself; Gadamer (1989) added that it would be interpreted within our own language, tradition, and historicity.

Therefore, the researcher cannot totally remove her/his pre-understandings and interpretations from the research. However, the researcher should bracket these pre-understandings and focus on description of the experience rather than interpretation, which would move the research into hermeneutics and hermeneutic phenomenology. "But for 'pure' phenomenology, the task is to describe the intentional objects of consciousness from within the perspective of the phenomenological reduction" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 241). Again, the key task of the researcher who conducts phenomenological research is *description* of the experience from the perspective of the participants and in their own voices, rather than *interpretation* of those experiences.

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological researchers must adopt a scientific rather than a natural attitude, and be in the phenomenological reduction when conducting lifeworld research. "The phenomenological reduction is a methodological device invented by Husserl in order to help make research findings more precise" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 239). Contrary to the natural attitude of taking existing things for granted, which constantly occurs in the lifeworld, phenomenological reduction, as explicated by Giorgi, has the researcher move out the natural attitude and "directs one to step back and describe and examine them [things and events]" (p. 239). The researcher continually must be aware of the phenomenon under investigation. The phenomenological reduction requires that the researcher bracket previous knowledge of the phenomenon in order to allow the phenomenon to reveal itself in the current situation.

A primary assumption that underlies interpretive research methodologies such as phenomenology is that humans seek meaning from their experiences and from the experiences of others. That meaning is interpreted through language, and thus leads to a reality that is socially constructed, rather than a reality that exists outside the meanings that humans attribute to it (Hultgren, 1989; Jax, 1984; van Manen, 1990). Interpretive research methodology seeks deep understanding of experience, and views knowledge not as existing independently of the knower, but as "a matter of agreement within a socially and historically bounded context" (Smith, 1983, p. 8). The relationship between the researcher and research participant is seen as a subject-subject interaction in which values and facts reside within each individual and cannot be separated (Smith, 1983). Phenomenological research methods, therefore, attempt to uncover the underlying essences and meanings of experience in order to arrive at a deeper, intersubjective understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The Research Process: Application of the Lifeworld Concept

Dalhberg and Drew's (1997) description of phenomenological research methodology is based on the application of the lifeworld concept. These authors discussed a research methodology, based on Husserl's philosophy of lifeworld, in which the concept of openness is central. Openness is described as a "perspective free of unexamined assumptions" (Dalhberg & Drew, 1997, p. 305) and as something that phenomenologists continually strive for but recognize as impossible to fully realize, as researchers are always part of the world that they wish to investigate. Objectivity means, however, that investigators must examine their own involvement with and knowledge of the phenomenon. Openness therefore requires researchers to have the capacity to be surprised and to remain open to the world as it presents itself. Openness is described as being open-minded and open-hearted, in that investigators need to be receptive, perceptive, and sensitive to what they are receiving as well as being able to engage with others without compromising the objectivity of the research. Openness is also described as fostering the ability to generate true research questions and requires the ability to be reflective and to be able to bracket one's preunderstanding in a way that allows the researcher to seek insight (Dahlberg & Drew, 1997).

Other supporting concepts critical to the lifeworld research paradigm are 'encounter', which has as its goal the development of knowledge and includes an ethical concern for people; 'immediacy', which relates to engagement

with the participant in a way that establishes trust, allowing for the possibility of disclosure; 'uniqueness', which recognizes that the understanding of individuals takes precedence over their position as representatives of a larger group; and 'meaning', which is recognized as contextual and expanding. As further noted by Dahlberg and Drew (1997), the lifeworld, recognized by Husserl as the foundation of science, implies an epistemology that holds the question of meaning as primary.

In phenomenology as a research methodology, the researcher plays a vital role in uncovering the essences or true being of the particular experience under study. Rather than remaining an uninvolved observer as in positivistic research, the phenomenological researcher also exists in the lifeworld of the phenomenon under study. The phenomenologist investigates the experience, seeking an authentic account from the perspective of the participant based on a dialog between researcher and participant. The task of the phenomenological researcher is to develop methods that are particularly suited to the experience they wish to study (Polkinghorne, 1989). According to van Manen (1990), personal experience, interviewing, observing, biographies, experiential descriptions obtained in literature or from others, diaries and journals, and art are all possible means of gathering lived experience data. Phenomenology focuses on the structure and meaning of the experience of a particular phenomenon with the purpose of studying how people experience the world in order to discover the essence of the phenomenon (Patton, 1990; van Manen, 1990). As defined by Dalhberg and Drew (1997), phenomenological research is the "description and elucidation of the everyday world in a way that expands our understanding of human experience" (p. 305).

Phenomenology aims at being presuppositionless, in that the researcher attempts to gain an awareness of his or her own experiences so as to be able to set them aside (bracketing) in order to best be able to understand the experience from the participants' perspective. The researcher seeks to uncover themes that express the meaning of the experience for the participants. In order to get at the core meanings, this process requires the researcher to reflectively analyze the structural or thematic aspects of these experiences to clarify and make explicit the meaning of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). Many sources can be used to assist in explicating themes, including the lived experience of the participants and various types of literature such as research, poetry, fiction, and other forms of art. One can also gain clues to the meaning of a theme by being attentive to the etymological origin of words or through searching of idiomatic phrases (van Manen, 1990). Semiotics is the practical writing or linguistic approach to phenomenology and reflects the research activity of describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting of the themes. Creating and writing a carefully argued phenomenological text is the ultimate object of the research process and is the process by which researchers and participants sustain a conversational relationship. In phenomenological research, the researcher is not a detached observer but, instead, maintains a strong and oriented relationship (van Manen, 1990).

Applications of Phenomenology to Human Resource Development

Phenomenological inquiry is a search for new possibilities and an avenue by which people can gain an understanding and awareness of different ways of thinking and acting, resulting in better decision-making (Hultgren, 1989). Hultgren described Langan's concept of appropriative undertaking where enhanced thought and understanding leads people to take a stand on and responsibility for their situation and their being (as cited in Hultgren, 1989). Human resource development scholars are continually striving for insight into the human experience; this type of research can provide a level of understanding that complements and strengthens current knowledge in this arena.

van Manen (1990) identified three ways that this methodology might be considered a philosophy of action. First, he suggested that acting flows from deepened thought. As one becomes more aware of aspects of human life that were previously taken for granted, this awareness is likely to result in action being taken in social situations where there is an imperative to act. He noted that while no specific political agenda is prescribed for any particular group, the thinking that occurs as a result of phenomenology is apt to lead individuals to engage in a political agenda, either personally or collectively. Second, van Manen (1990) viewed the phenomenological process of inquiry as a means to support ongoing involvement in everyday life and practice in a way that is "virtually absent in the increasingly bureaucratized and technological spheres of pedagogic life" (p. 154). Third, he expressed how phenomenological reflection relates to personal engagement in terms of needing to understand how others perceive the world and how this understanding changes the way individuals act toward others. The relevance to human resource development is apparent in that knowledge of human experience in a variety of contexts and personal self-awareness is crucial to effective HRD practice.

van Manen (1990) also discussed ways that the relationship between research and life (or between thoughtfulness and tact) could be strengthened. These include reinstating lived experience as a basis for practical action and discovering new sources of information for research; moving toward a lived sense of principled

knowledge, in that investigators continually question the guiding principles of what is done in research; considering research/writing as thoughtful learning and as a way to become more aware of meaning and significance; and recognizing that research is a pedagogic way of life and as such, the two are inextricably linked. This approach can help HRD researchers remain open as they attempt to understand the complex nature of human experience in organizations.

Polkinghorne (1989) made the case that phenomenological inquiry can be used to impact changes in public policy and, by extension, quality of life. First, the research can be used to help people who are experiencing a phenomenon to understand and come to terms with their experiences. Participants can also find the process of being involved in the research to be beneficial, possibly in terms of finding a community of people who have similar experiences. Second, individuals who work with people who have experienced a particular life situation can gain insight into the experiences of these individuals and can be more responsive and sensitive due to their increased understanding. Third, individuals who are part of a power structure can gain information as to what people experiencing the phenomena believe should have occurred and this information might result in some change being initiated. Lastly, phenomenological research can provide insights into what policies should be changed and can increase the motivation of those in power to do so, based on the impact of understanding the personal meaning of the experience to those experiencing it. In considering the application to human resource development, it is clear that phenomenology offers the possibility of insights that can result in enhancements to practice. There are critical issues in HRD practice that merit the depth of awareness and reflection afforded by phenomenological research, in that it provides a level of insight that might not be gained through other research approaches. The thinking that occurs as a result of phenomenology informs one's ongoing involvement in everyday life and practice and may lead to action, either individually or organizationally.

As discussed, phenomenological research provides in-depth understanding, a higher capacity for discernment, and enables the researcher to be more situationally sensitive (van Manen, 1990). Additionally, phenomenological reflection can be viewed as key to in-depth, thoughtful learning. "More fundamental than skill learning, it is thoughtful learning which is at the heart of pedagogic life" (van Manen, 1990, p. 157). van Manen's (1990) discussion of pedagogic competence is at the heart of this issue -- how does an investigator get at an understanding of what is a 'leader', a 'follower,' a 'mentor,' and other constructs important to human resource development. Phenomenological research questions integral to HRD practice are unlimited and can include those that attempt to explicate any human experience in organizations for which the investigator has a serious interest and commitment. Arenas in which phenomenological research would be well suited include cross-cultural experiences, leadership, change, organization development, or any other area in which a HRD investigator might want to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of participants' experiences of a particular phenomenon. Essentially, phenomenological research is an effective methodology for human resource development scholars who wish to enhance their understanding of human experience in organizations, and is especially applicable when dealing with issues that are both complex and unique.

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